



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton  
Middle District of Florida

Tampa	Orlando	Jacksonville	Ocala	Fort Myers
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE			CONTACT: STEVE COLE	
APRIL 9, 2010			PHONE: (813) 274-6136	
<a href="http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr">http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr</a>			FAX: (813) 274-6300	

## **LEHIGH ACRES MAN CONVICTED ON DRUG AND WEAPONS CHARGES**

Tampa, Florida - U.S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that a federal jury yesterday found Joseph James Lese (age 58, Lehigh Acres, Florida) guilty of federal firearms and narcotics violations. Lese was convicted of possessing and transferring an unregistered sawed-off shotgun; conspiring to possess with intent to distribute at least 500 grams of cocaine; and possessing firearms, including semiautomatic assault weapons, in furtherance of the drug trafficking conspiracy. Lese faces a maximum penalty of life in federal prison. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for July 19, 2010.

According to testimony and evidence presented at trial, on December 5, 2008, Lese met with an undercover agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), who was posing as a large scale drug trafficker, and, along with others, sold six firearms to the agent, including two sawed-off shotguns and an assault rifle. Lese also negotiated with the undercover agent for the future purchase of kilogram quantities of cocaine.

On January 14, 2009, Lese and four other co-conspirators drove from Lehigh Acres to Tampa to trade 13 firearms, including a sawed-off shotgun and three semiautomatic

assault weapons, for three 3 kilograms of cocaine. Lese and the others were arrested after arriving at the meeting, delivering the firearms, and receiving the cocaine. Lese's co-conspirators have all pleaded guilty to weapons and drug charges and are awaiting sentencing.

This case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) with the assistance of the Manatee County Sheriff's Office. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney W. Stephen Muldrow.

This is another case prosecuted as a part of the Department of Justice's "Project Safe Neighborhoods" program - a nationwide, gun-violence reduction strategy led by ATF. United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton, along with Virginia O'Brien, Special Agent in Charge, ATF Tampa Field Division, is coordinating the Project Safe Neighborhoods effort here in the Middle District of Florida in cooperation with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.